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FEBRUARY 1988

AMERICAN CITY & COUNTY

...cials Join ...itorial Board

Providing Safer Park Facilities

Anticipating Growth Can Ease Traffic

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The 20/20 Vision For Transportation

AMERICAN CITY & COUNTY®

February 1988 Vol. 103, No. 2

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Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio, Texas, received the *American City & County* Local Government Leader of the Year Award at the National League of Cities Congress.

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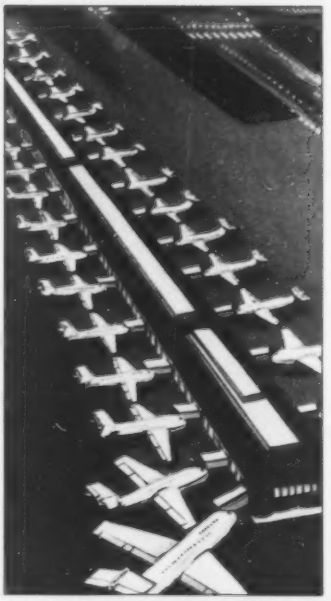
Cover photography by Terri Teague & Associates, Atlanta



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NIMBY Home To Roost

One year ago, my wife and I purchased a new home in a suburb north of Atlanta, the small (population 5,000) city of Alpharetta. Like many of the communities outside Atlanta's city limits, Alpharetta is taking on residents like the United States takes on debt. Rush-hour traffic has at least doubled in the last 12 months. Fast-food restaurants, office buildings, shopping strips and 24-hour supermarkets are going up at a breakneck pace, pushing out the mom-and-pop groceries, the small-town atmosphere and the forest land.

And now, NIMBY has come home to roost.

Fulton County's main sanitary landfill will close this year. Located approximately halfway between Alpharetta and the State Capitol building in downtown Atlanta, the Morgan Falls landfill will reach capacity in the spring, with a public golf driving range possibly being built on the site. Shopping areas, new businesses and housing all have sprouted up around that site in recent years.

Now the county wants to site a new landfill, and the chosen location is nearly in my backyard. The NIMBY syndrome — Not In My Back Yard — has struck with full force in Alpharetta.

Posters and leaflets were everywhere last December when the state scheduled two public hearings in Alpharetta to discuss the site proposal. "We Can Stop the Dump," they broadcast. "A garbage dump will poison the environment," the flyers said, "pollute streams and wells; breed rats, flies, mosquitoes, birds and wild dogs; foul the air for miles; produce poisonous fumes and gases; devastate a 460-acre forest; threaten public health with cancer-causing chemicals; crowd roads with 400 garbage and trash trucks daily; wipe out property values; ruin quality of life for young and old; restrict future development."

The exaggerations really can take hold with an emotional issue such as siting a landfill. Minor concerns can be magnified tremendously by a frightened and uninformed public, unaware of current landfill protections and environmental requirements. Quite frankly, landfill practices of the past have been dangerous, but that is not the case with today's new landfills.

Opposition at the hearings focused on the potential damage to drinking-water supplies in the area, where many homeowners get their water from groundwater sources. Landfill liners and leachate-collection and monitoring systems are not enough to salve the ire of residents who see a landfill about to be dumped in their neighborhood.

But hidden among all the objections, and truthfully at the core of my dilemma (as well, I'm sure, with the majority of those who oppose the landfill) is the real crux of the debate — property values and future development. The old landfill at Morgan Falls had none of today's environmental protections. Sitting within a quarter mile of the Chattahoochee River, that landfill likely is contaminating Atlanta's water supply. Rats and birds have been there for years, but right alongside is a large youth sports complex, with football and soccer fields. People fish for trout in the river a holler away; new offices and apartments are being leased across the street; property values are high.

Nine hundred concerned and angry residents turned out for the first public hearing, jamming the local high school's gymnasium. They spoke vociferously against the new landfill, citing the dangers to water supplies.

While the turnout at the second hearing did not equal the first, the opposition was just as adamant. Residents, and even some local officials, urged the state to look at alternatives to the landfill. "A landfill is the easy way out," said Alpharetta City Councilor Sandra Thompson. "There are other ways to dispose of solid waste, and they cost a little more. But as a taxpayer, I would like to be given the opportunity of deciding whether I want to pay that bill."

What was not emphasized, however, was the fear of plummeting property values in one of the county's prime growth areas. It's a tough call — for citizens and public officials. No one wants a landfill in their neighborhood, but it must go somewhere. Like the now-famous garbage barge, the landfill has to find a home.

I suspect that, in the end, the citizens of Alpharetta and north Fulton County will have their way. When organized, the public can wield a great deal of clout. Then there will be another site chosen and another angry gathering of citizens at another public hearing. It's a tough call, and I'm still on the fence. □

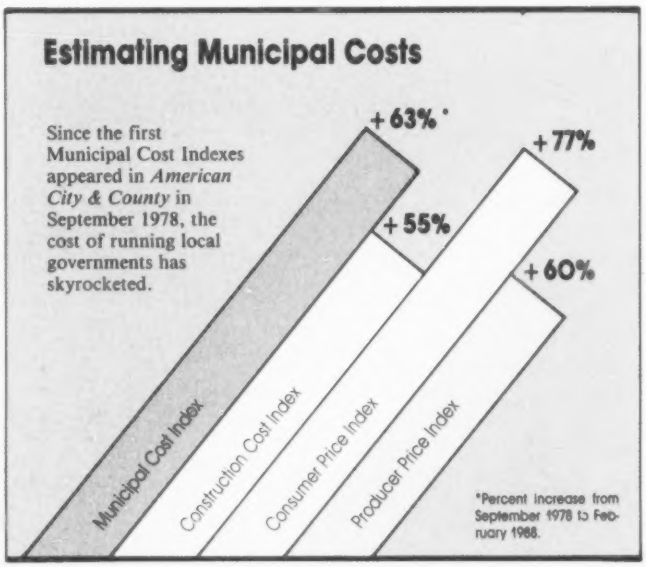
— Ken Anderberg

Explaining the Municipal Cost Indexes

Readers continually ask how *American City & County* compiles its exclusive cost estimates for products and services purchased by local governments — the "Municipal Cost Indexes" published on the last page of every issue. This article is being reprinted from a previous issue to give readers a better understanding of those calculations.

When relative prices for goods and services are changing, there is no such thing as a perfect price index. While a statistical index will understate the costs for some, it may overstate costs for others. The index, however, can represent a yardstick by which locally developed indexes and budget forecasts can be measured.

The Municipal Cost Index is adjusted by changes in the cost of materials and supplies, wages and contracted-for services. The index is based on monthly statistical data collected by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Commerce, as well as independent sources in the building and construction fields.


Estimating Municipal Costs
Since the first Municipal Cost Indexes appeared in *American City & County* in September 1978, the cost of running local governments has skyrocketed.
+63%*
+77%
+55%
+60%
Municipal Cost Index
Construction Cost Index
Consumer Price Index
Producer Price Index
*Percent increase from September 1978 to February 1988.

The index is a weighted average of the more detailed accompanying price indexes measuring construction-contract costs, consumer-cost fluctuations and industrial-commodity wholesale prices. The weighted factors are designed specifically for *American City & County* readers, and reflect the composition of local-government purchases and services.

The data are used to project a composite picture for the local budget or finance director, along with the operating or purchasing department manager, of how municipal and county services and costs are faring for the month — with a comparison to the previous month and year.

The Construction Cost Index is the largest segment of the Municipal Cost Index, since contract services account for nearly 30 percent of local-government treasuries. The most significant portion of this cost is the amount spent on capital construction projects. This index reflects the changes in the cost of materials, and skilled and unskilled labor in both the general-construction and building-construction markets. The index is not seasonally adjusted. This is a key point because labor can play an important role in changing the calculated index — if it were accounted for on a seasonally adjusted basis. The Construction Cost Index includes the data most reflecting the types of construction expected in the municipal market.

Figures from the U.S. Department of Commerce and other sources are used to compile the Construction Cost Index. The Commerce Department's data reflect the ratio of the annual value of new construction in current dollars, to the comparable value of new construction in 1977 dollars. *American City & County* makes the dollar change to 1967 dollars, so all indexes are based on the 1967 dollar. The Commerce Department uses construction put-in-place estimates by type of construction to weigh appropriate special and general-purpose construction costs, in addition to contractor prices.

The Consumer Price Index is used to measure the upward pressure expected on municipal wage rates and inflation. The index is a statistical measure of the price change of goods and services in major expenditure groups such as clothing, health, housing, food, recreation and transportation for all urban consumers. The index measures the purchasing power of the consumer dollar by comparing the cost of a "market basket" of goods and services. The index uses the Department of Labor's All-Urban Consumers Price Index, which measures a list of items representative of a typical all-urban household budget.

The Producer Price Index is used to measure the cost fluctuations of goods and materials, since purchases of goods and materials account for nearly 20 percent of a local government's budget. The index is designed to show the rate and direction of price movement for individual commodities and commodity groupings. The index measures "real" price changes — changes not influenced by differences in quality, quantity or terms of sale.

All systematic production of goods and materials are included in the index for industrial commodities, except for agricultural products and food. Items that are so individualistic in nature, as to be priced separately, are not included.

Also featured is a section titled Quarterly Municipal Trends. These data outline changes in local-government receipts, federal grants-in-aid, durable purchases, consumable purchases, services, structures, wages, budget surplus or deficit, and employment. These trend items can let finance and budget officers know how they compare with other local governments each quarter.

These indexes help dramatize, justify or illustrate increased governmental expenditures attributable to inflation when submitting annual budgets for review. They also provide information about price trends, which may affect a city, county, state or individual department, allowing time to minimize the effects of a budget shortfall or deficit.

With state and local expenditures increasing, and federal aid declining, local governments have to find innovative ways to either finance their operations or control costs. The Municipal Cost Indexes can help provide the necessary information to keep local-government budgets up-to-date on changes in the construction market and industrial commodities, while keeping a watchful eye on inflation.

Although no single price index will provide inflation relief to every local government in the nation, the *American City & County* Municipal Cost Indexes can provide a yardstick by which locally developed indexes and forecasts can be gauged. □

Candidates Snub League of Cities

America's city officials were steaming in Las Vegas, Nev., when only two presidential candidates showed their hands at the National League of Cities (NLC) 64th annual Congress of Cities. The snub, however, only served to raise the ante in the eyes of NLC officers. "Not one shread of political help should be given by local-government officials to anyone running for Congress, or who wants to grow up and be president," said outgoing NLC President Cathy Reynolds, "until there is a commitment on that candidate's part to address the issues that are central to your communities. And that means flat out telling these campaigns that your support is contingent on those issues being dealt with."

Jackson

Reynolds, who serves on the Denver City Council, added, "To the presidential candidates who didn't choose to join us, you missed a great opportunity. Don't think we are through bothering you. One of you is likely to be president, and we are going to do everything in the power of 5,000 elected local officials to make sure that the day you take office you are going to understand local government. We are going to keep calling, writing and visiting you to make sure of it. And we are going to make your views on our cities and towns known."

Democratic candidates Jesse Jackson and Gov. Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts did attend the conference to speak before the more than 8,000 attendees. Jackson pledged to fight for federal aid for urban programs to improve infrastructure systems and reduce poverty and homelessness. He cited areas in the current federal budget where significant reductions could be made to reduce deficits, such as streamlined military spending, while also calling for "fairer" taxation policies and the use of public pension funds to "invest in America."

Dukakis told city officials tax increases may be necessary to reduce federal deficits. He called also for reductions in the military budget and the implementation of national health insurance. "We have to get serious about deficit reduction," Dukakis said. "I won't rule out tax increases. I don't think any serious candidate can."

In her report as NLC president, Reynolds outlined the organization's top priorities for 1988, including the reauthorization of federal housing and community-development programs, Clean Air Act reauthorization, tax legislation and welfare reform.

"It is time, and it is possible," Reynolds said, "to stop disinvestment in America. It is time to focus our resources on the future of this country. As a nation, we can be no stronger than our communities, and communities are only as strong as their ability to raise strong, healthy, productive people."

Investing in America's communities was the underlying emphasis of the conference's many seminars and general sessions. Overflow crowds packed meeting rooms for discussions on housing, zoning and liability issues, as well. Other sessions focused on economic development, infrastructure, waste disposal, financing, substance abuse, municipal management and intergovernmental cooperation.

"State and local governments are being forced to talk to each other," said John Shannon, executive director of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, during a seminar on "State Innovations in Assisting Local Governments."

"States should give local governments more discretion in raising revenue," said Dawn Clark Netsch at the same meeting. The Illinois state senator and chair of the State-Local Task Force of the National Conference of State Legislatures added, "States should assist locals with technological assistance and user charge programs. The property-tax system should be improved, including value-assessment procedures. States should review mandates on local government, eliminating or relaxing some."

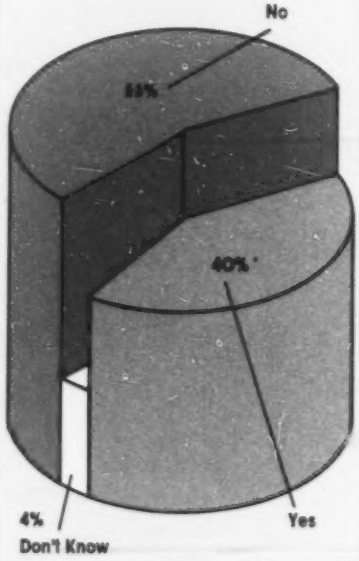
Netsch said other priorities formulated by the task force include re-evaluating responsibilities for each level of government, reviewing formulas for state aid, and searching for low-cost methods of assistance. "State legislators should place a higher priority on state-local issues and treat local governments as partners," she said.

On the congress' last day, Reynolds passed the leadership gavel to Portland, Maine, City Councilor Pam Plumb. Mayor Terry Goddard of Phoenix, Ariz., was named first vice president. Two President's Awards were presented at the conference, to retiring Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier and long-time Gary, Ind., Mayor Richard Hatcher.

— Ken Anderberg

SURVEY SPOTLIGHT

Is your community considering consolidation of any services with other cities and counties?



*Percent of communities surveyed. Base = 211
SOURCE: AC&C Survey of Issues and Trends

Hazwaste Revenues Expected To Grow

Consultants from Arthur D. Little Inc. are predicting revenues of hazardous-waste treatment and disposal companies will reach $10 billion in 1995 from $2 to $2.3 billion in 1986. The consultants also say American industry will spend more money on professional management of its hazardous wastes off-site, motivated by the fact that untreated hazardous-waste disposal carries long-term liabilities.

The consultants, Lee Fox and Fred Iannazzi, base their research on the future prospects of eight waste-management companies accounting for the major share of income in the landfill, incineration and aqueous-treatment segments of the disposal industry.

Fox and Iannazzi predict increasing profitability for companies owning landfills, including American Ecology, Browning-Ferris, Chemical Waste Management, International Technology and

MUNICIPAL COST INDEXES

The **Municipal Cost Index** rose to 354.1 this month, a 0.4-percent increase from January. The index now has risen for 15 consecutive months. The **Construction Cost Index** rose 0.6 percent, after a slight decline last month. Both the **Consumer Price Index** and the **Producer Price Index** saw increases of 0.1 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively, with the Consumer Price Index increasing the most over last year, 4.5 percent.

Mixed fertilizers dropped 0.2 percent, to 268.9, while concrete products increased the same amount. Fuel oil no. 2 saw the greatest gain of any item from January, a 3.6-percent increase to 507.1. Diesel fuel has risen 43.6 percent since February 1987.

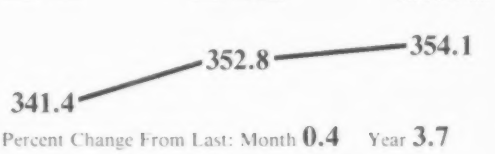
— Compiled by Tim Darnell

THIS MONTH'S MARKETBASKET

	Current Index	Percent Change From: Last Month	Last Year
Air Conditioners	150.8	0	1.2
Apparel	188.7	0.2	1.7
Asphalt Roofing	305.6	−0.1	−12.9
Chemicals, Industrial	343.7	0.9	8.5
Coal	510.5	−0.2	−4.6
Concrete Products	326.7	0.2	0.7
Construction Machinery	376.2	0.1	1.8
Diesel Fuel	488.2	2.3	43.6
Electric Components	203.4	0.2	0.2
Electric Lamps	352.4	0.2	1.6
Electric Power	445.0	−0.9	−0.7
Engines, I.C.	360.0	0.2	1.8
Fans, Blowers	371.5	0.9	0.7
Fertilizers, Mixed	268.9	−0.2	9.3
Floor Coverings	203.0	0.7	2.6
Flow Instruments	242.4	0.6	2.0
Footwear	270.0	−0.7	2.5
Foundry Products	368.0	0.3	1.7
Fuel Oil No. 2	507.1	3.6	37.7
Furniture	329.6	0.1	2.5
Gasoline	406.5	1.0	30.5
Generator Sets	361.9	0	2.7
Glass	240.6	−0.2	3.2
Glass Containers	401.3	0	0.1
Gypsum Products	305.6	−0.1	−12.9
Hardware	309.4	0.3	1.5
Heating Equipment	281.5	2.6	3.7
HVAC Controls	132.2	0.4	0.6
LP Gas	376.8	1.3	26.1
Lubricants	350.1	0.3	−0.2
Lumber	344.2	0.9	9.2
Metal Fabrications	327.4	0.4	3.2
Millwork	334.2	0	4.8
Motor Vehicle Parts	367.4	−0.1	2.6
Mowers	267.1	0	1.1
Natural Gas	1011.8	−3.2	−8.6
Office Machines	159.9	−0.3	2.8
Paint	335.6	0.3	8.2
Paper	327.1	0.7	4.6
Passenger Cars	246.1	−2.2	−1.2
Plumbing Fixtures	337.7	0.6	4.6
Plywood	245.7	1.2	4.5
Portland Cement	346.6	−0.1	−0.6
Residual Fuel	623.9	1.8	38.4
Sand, Gravel	330.1	0	2.6
Sanitary Papers	388.6	0	1.7
Soaps, Detergents	281.2	0.5	3.4
Sporting Goods	211.3	0.2	2.0
Steel Mill Products	368.3	0.6	5.3
Struc. Clay Products	319.8	0.1	3.4
Switchgear	291.2	0	1.9
Tires, Tubes	232.8	0	0.6
Transformers	240.6	0.1	1.4
Trucks	335.3	0.1	−3.4
Valves	109.8	0.3	2.2
Wire, Cable	228.2	2.3	11.2
Wiring Devices	389.8	0.3	2.7

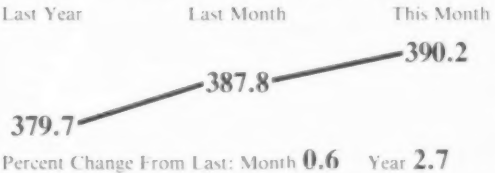
At-A-Glance Changes

MUNICIPAL COST INDEX



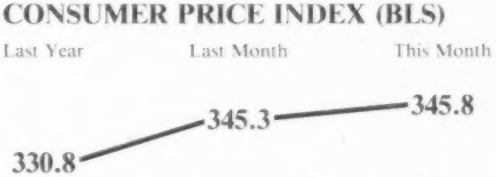
Percent Change From Last: Month **0.4** Year **3.7**

CONSTRUCTION COST INDEX



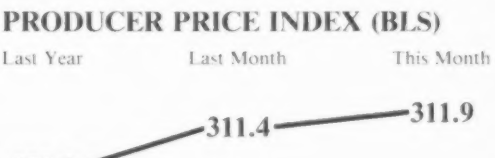
Percent Change From Last: Month **0.6** Year **2.7**

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (BLS)



Percent Change From Last: Month **0.1** Year **4.5**

PRODUCER PRICE INDEX (BLS)



Percent Change From Last: Month **0.2** Year **4.4**

These figures are calculated on a base year of 1967.

QUARTERLY MUNICIPAL TRENDS

	Current Level	Percent Change From: Last Qtr.	Last Year
Receipts	634.8B	.9	7.8
Federal Grants	104.1B	6.6	−10.9
Durable Purchases	23.6B	3.1	9.8
Consumables	37.6B	2.7	−6.0
Services	387.4B	2.3	8.0
Structures	64.6B	−2.7	16.2
Salaries, Wages	309.8B	2.3	6.0
Surplus	59.4B	−7.7	1.0
Employment	13.999M	−.4	2.7